

What is claimed is:

1. A heat and pressure consolidated laminate, comprising in superimposed relationship:
a core layer containing at least one cellulosic sheet impregnated with a thermosetting resin; and
a first decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material.
2. The laminate of claim 1 wherein said thermosetting resin is a phenol-formaldehyde resin.
3. The laminate of claim 1, wherein said decorative layer is bonded leather having a sheet thickness ranging from about 0.2 mm to about 4.0 mm.
4. The laminate of claim 1, further comprising an overlay layer disposed on a side of said decorative layer opposite said core layer.
5. The laminate of claim 1, further comprising a second decorative layer, disposed on the side of the core layer opposite the first decorative layer, said second decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material.
6. The laminate of claim 1, further comprising a backer layer of at least one cellulosic sheet impregnated with a thermosetting resin, said backer layer being disposed on the side of the core layer opposite the decorative layer.

7. A heat and pressure consolidated laminate, comprising in superimposed relationship:

a core layer containing at least one cellulosic sheet impregnated with a thermosetting phenol-formaldehyde resin, said cellulosic sheet having a resin content ranging from about 25 percent to about 35 percent;

a decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material, said decorative layer is bonded leather having a sheet thickness ranging from about 0.2 mm to about 4.0 mm; and

an overlay layer disposed on a side of said decorative layer opposite the core layer, said overlay layer being at least one sheet of alpha cellulose paper impregnated with a melamine formaldehyde resin.

8. A method for the production of a heat and pressure consolidated leather laminate comprising the steps of:

stacking in a superimposed relationship a core layer comprised of at least one cellulosic sheet impregnated with a thermosetting resin, a decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material and a release sheet between plates of a thermosetting press;

increasing the pressure of the thermosetting press to a predetermined pressure;

increasing the temperature of the thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature;

maintaining the stacked layers in the heated, pressurized thermosetting press for a predetermined period of time sufficient to consolidate the stacked layers into a decorative laminate;

decreasing the temperature of the press while maintaining the elevated pressure for a predetermined period of time sufficient to cool the laminate;

removing the laminate from the thermosetting press; and

removing the release sheet from the laminate.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said predetermined temperature ranges from about 120° C to about 250° C.

10. The method of claim 8, wherein said predetermined pressure ranges from about 400 PSI to about 1600 PSI.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein said period of time sufficient to consolidate the stacked layers into a laminate ranges from about 2 minutes to about 20 minutes.

12. The method of claim 8, wherein said period of time sufficient to cool the laminate ranges from about 7 minutes to about 15 minutes.

13. The method of claim 8, wherein said release sheet is textured to impart an embossed texture on the decorative layer.

14. A method for the production of a heat and pressure consolidated leather laminate comprising the steps of:

stacking in a superimposed relationship a core layer comprised of at least one cellulosic sheet impregnated with a thermosetting resin, a decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material and a release sheet between plates of a thermosetting press;

increasing the pressure of the thermosetting press to a predetermined pressure, said predetermined pressure ranging from about 400 PSI to about 1600 PSI;

increasing the temperature of the thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature, said predetermined temperature ranging from about 120° C to about 250° C;

maintaining the stacked layers in the heated, pressurized thermosetting press for a predetermined period of time sufficient to laminate the stacked layers, said period of time sufficient to laminate the stacked layers ranging from about 2 minutes to about 20 minutes;

decreasing the temperature of the press while maintaining the elevated pressure for a predetermined period of time sufficient to cool the laminate, said period of time sufficient to cool the laminate ranging from about 7 minutes to about 15 minutes;

decreasing the pressure of the thermosetting press; and

removing the laminate from the thermosetting press and removing the release sheet from the laminate.

15. The method of claim 14, wherein said release sheet is textured to impart an embossed texture on the decorative layer.

16. A method for the production of a heat and pressure consolidated leather laminate comprising the steps of:

setting the temperature of said continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature;

setting the pressure of said continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined pressure;

feeding in a superimposed relationship a core layer comprised of at least one cellulosic sheet impregnated with a thermosetting resin, a decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material and a release sheet into a continuous thermosetting press, said core layer, decorative layer and release sheet being fed into the continuous thermosetting press from a location upstream from said press;

selecting a line speed of the continuous thermosetting press that allows the superimposed layers to remain in the heated, pressurized press for a period of time sufficient to form a laminate from said layers; and

removing the release sheet from the laminate as it exits the press.

17. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of transporting the leather laminate to handling equipment located downstream from said continuous thermosetting press for further processing.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein said predetermined temperature ranges from about 120° C to about 250° C.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein said predetermined pressure ranges from about 400 PSI to about 1600 PSI.

20. The method of claim 16, wherein said core layer, decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material, and release sheet are fed into the continuous thermosetting press from continuous webs located upstream from said continuous thermosetting press.

21. The method of claim 16, wherein said line speed is about 5 feet per minute.